BLAK STAR

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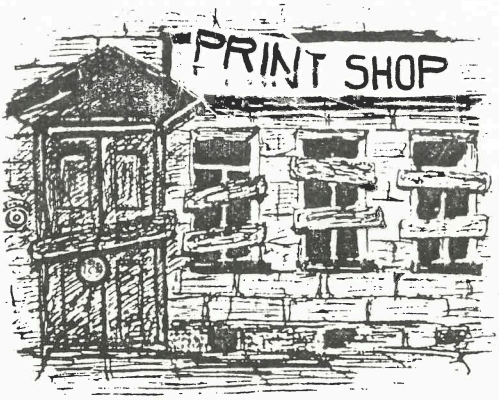
"...we are told 'if you did away with government...the world would become one vast field of chaotic rapine and slaughter!' What is it now?"

J.A. Andrews



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EDITORIAL

That insidious claw of state control has made its presence strongly felt in recent months with the Labor governments attempts to introduce the Australia Card *(don't leave home without it - or else!)* ID system. But this is not an isolated instance of the state's attempt to take control of peoples lives, though it is in all respects the most obvious.

In March this year the Australian Government passed "Plant Variety Rights" (PVR) legislation through the Senate. This legislation allows companies to patent genetically engineered plant varieties forcing farmers to rely upon these companies for their seed every year. If one assumes that multinationals occupy some niche in the state apparatus, then it becomes obvious that individuals are being forced into the position where they must rely upon, and hence be controlled by, the state. This PVR legislation is only in the interests of huge multinationals since even if the situation arose where an individual or a small company were to genetically engineer a unique plant variety they would never be able to meet the costs of an international court battle if a multinational chose to steal the variety and flog the seed off overseas.

In Europe the legislation has led to the loss of 200 natural vegetable varieties, which, despite its affects on the natural enviroment due to an ever diminishing gene pool, will cause farmers and consumers alike to rely upon the state to supply them with a few highly successful varieties of food plants. In the short term such highyield varieties will be wonderful for flagging

economies but as they starve the soil of its nutrients (as they have been shown to do) and as they are engineered to be infertile, the technology will soon lead to higher real costs for farmers and consumers and high profits for the companies selling seed and fertilizer. With the range of new and complex problems arising out of PVR people will also be forced to rely upon the state to kill off its own economic and environmental monsters. Since PVR legislation was brought in overseas, Shell, the oil company, has monopolized plant patents and as a result is today the largest holder of such patents in the world! There must be a great deal of money in PVR for an international oil company to start selling fruit and veges.

In much the same vein is the looming problem of food irradiation, of which the lack of public debate is indicative of the absolute control the state has over its "happy and contented" subjects. It is incredible that the state has the ability to push through such a questionable and dangerous technology without much more than a whimper from the masses to whom food and its importance in day to day life should be clearly obvious.

On the international scene the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been in the news lately as parliamentarians forecast grim days ahead for the Banana Republic of Australia. It has been suggested that as the federal government's economic policy suffers one disaster after another that it may be necessary, in the future, to call in the IMF to bail out our ailing economy. The IMF has been the bail fund for third world countries, but like all bail funds there are conditions that go with it. The IMF's criterion for bailing out bankrupt countries is the *condition* that that country ally itself with the USA and the *hope* that capitalism will be embraced as a token of

gratitude. Beyond this the IMF takes effective control of the state and demands a drop in wages of 25% in return for its assistance. Such international criminals are everywhere. If the above injustices are to stop people must begin to defy the government in all its guises (national, international, multi-national) and take control of their own lives.

Of course the greatest crime the state and multinational partnership have committed against freedom is their creation of the military-industrial complex. This totally unproductive and wasteful arm of the state, is certainly the greatest and most irresponsible of the evils foisted upon humanity. Because the military-industrial complex is totally unproductive it must be funded by those that produce humanly useful consumerables and products. Food is uppermost on this list, therefore when one considers that about half of government expenditure, and a large proportion of the labour force, is used in the production of useless services and products (eg. police, defence, governments, etc.), it is understandable why people have to starve to death. This system also explains why people have to work a 40 hr week, and why students spend years conning themselves, their teachers and competing with their friends to make sure they get enough education to survive in this cut-throat world.

There is a theory that says, that one should attempt to extend those few spheres of freedom wherever they already exist. At the centre of all state oppression is our own inabilty to provide for ourselves, and the state's ability to withhold basic needs, particularly food. Thus the politics of food are probably more important than most people realise, so if you want to start undermining government power; start growing your own!

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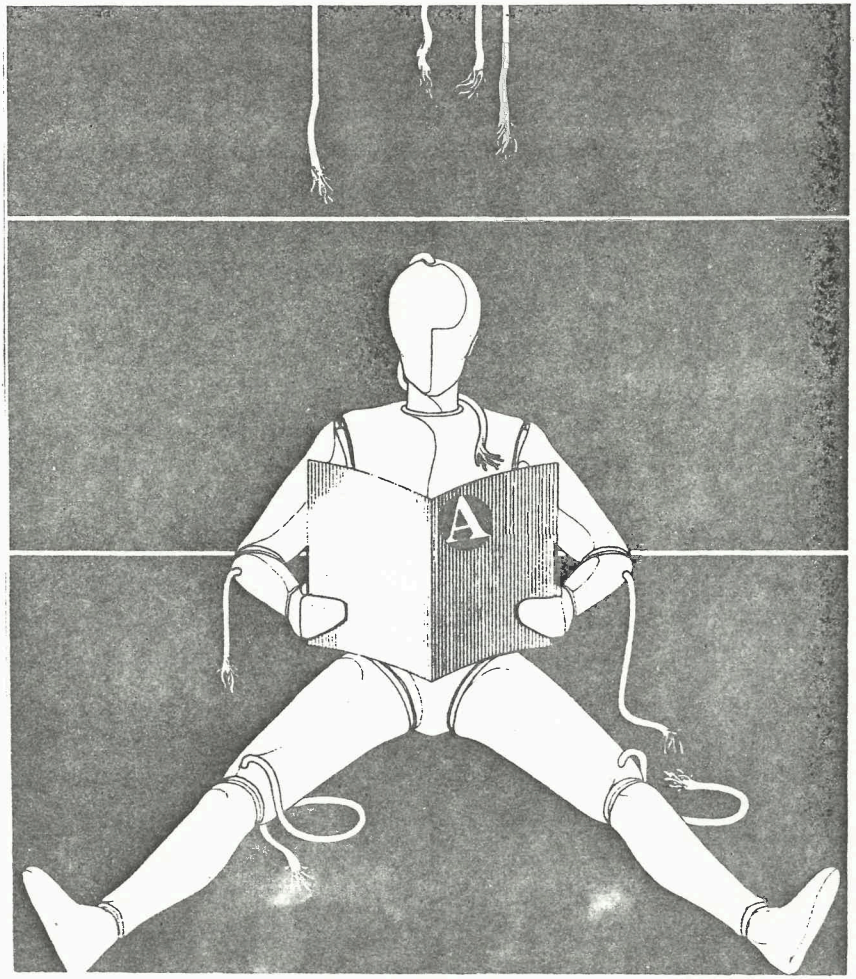


ANARCHIST BOOKSHOP

FOOD IRRADIATION?

The Australian Government, and particularly the Queensland Government, have thrown their weight behind moves to establish food irradiation plants in Australia. This is surprising considering thousands of petitions presented to the American government have resulted in a bill being presented last April, that will effectively reverse that government's decision to irradiate food. The planned dosage for Australian irradiated food is ten times higher than the American dose.

In the case of Queensland the decision to go ahead with their irradiation plants is even more astonishing given that there are presently two independent inquiries into the saftey of food irradiation - a Parliamentary Committee inquiry and an inquiry by the Australian Consumers Association who have still to table their reports.

THE GOVERNMENT'S RATIONALE

Irradiation is the latest of a line of food preservation methods used by the Australian horticultural and food industry. These methods have included cooking, packaging, freezing, dehydrating and the use of chemical additives. Irradiation claims to be able to inhibit the sprouting of vegetables, delay the ripening of fruits, kill insect pests in fruit, grains or spices, and, at higher doses, reduce the bacterial load of some meats and seafood products. Along with these benefits the state also claims that the process is completely safe and that the consumer will benefit from reduced wastage, greater convenience and better quality food. This view of course reinforced by another benevolant arm of the state the National Health and Medical research Committee, which concluded that there were "no special problems conected with food irradiation".

Our parliamentary "representatives" would have us think that the establishment of food irradiation is in our own interests, but there seems to be another side to the irradiation coin.

CONCERNS

The problem with food irradiation is that the same ability of ionising radiation to kill pests, moulds and to prolong the freshness of food is also responsible for unique chemical changes, the loss of vitamins and polyunsaturated fatty acids, and off flavours and smells. Add to this its suitability to a limited range of foods, the necessity to use additves to offset undesirable effects, as well as concern over the effects that irradiated food has had on humans and animals, and the need for food irradiation begins to require some serious justifications.

In the UK the ability of irradiation to kill off bacteria has allowed some companies to salvage spoiled fish catches and resell the product to the public. While irradiation will kill off the bug it will not destroy the toxins produced prior to irradiation, and as there is no way of testing a product for irradiation as yet, this sort of exploitation of the process by large companies is sure to increase.

MONITORING AND TESTING PROCEDURES

In the past governments in their haste to introduce new and innapropriate technologies have neglected thoughough research and the strict controls necessary to guarantee the safety of consumers (e.g. Three Mile Island, Chenobyl). The same government attitude seems to apply in the case of food irradiation.

The Federal Government has agreed that irradiated food should be labeled "irradiated" but it is unlikely that such a regulation will apply to foods sold loose or in bulk, or to ingredients in processed foods. In the absence of tests for irradiation, as already mentioned, there is no way that even the minimum requirements for food labeling can be enforced. Current studies in the UK and the US to develope such tests are not likely to see results for three years.

RESEARCH?

The recent debacle involving Chernobyl, and the chequered history of nuclear energy since it was first experimented with at Hiroshima, must raise questions over the safety of the irradiation process in Australia. We are assured that after 40 years of research into irradiation, that there are no safety problems. But even a meagre scrutiny of the history of the testing process reveals a web of bad and fraudulent science.

The disastrous history of irradiation research began in 1953 with the Atoms of Peace programme. The first 10 years of testing were conducted by the U.S. army and in 1963 clearance was obtained for can-packed bacon. It took five years for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to revoke the clearance after finding adverse effects in animals fed irradiated bacon, and major deficiencies in the conduct of the studies. As a result of the FDA's findings the research was handed over to a private company. In 1983 three of the directors of this firm were convicted of doing fraudulent research for government and industry.

In 1971 it appeared that some credibility had been restored to the testing of irradiated foods with the creation of a Joint Expert Committee of the UN, incorporating the WHO and the FAO, (JECFI).

Testing for the toxic effects of radiolytic chemicals created by irradiation presents particular problems for researchers. Normal chemical testing involves feeding high doses of the chemical. Lack of effect at these doses guarantees safety at the lower doses likely in food production. But unlike their "normal" counterparts, radiolytic chemicals are created randomly. It is therefore difficult to isolate such chemicals, and in turn test each, by the above method. Use of higher doses of radiation might create such chemicals in higher quantities in a mixed cocktail of changes in the food but would probably make the food unpalatable and produce other detrimental effects that would effect the validity of feeding studies. Accordingly, the JECFI relaxed the rules for testing of irradiated foods in 1976 so that they no longer had to meet the same degree of stringency in testing as required for chemical additives. Given the current

concern over possibly harmful additives that have slipped through the safety net of animal testing, this change is not reassuring.

Reports have pronounced the process to be safe up to an average dose of 10kGy, which will permit bacterial reduction but not sterilisation of foods or the reduction of spore forming bacteria. These reports of course being based on the above revised criterion for safety!

IS IRRADIATION SAFE?

In addition to side effects already mentioned there are other health concerns that should be considered in any assessment of the safety issue. The list of health problems associated with food irradiation includes kidney disease, testicular tumors, abnormal blood cells and reduced fertility. Food irradiation has been shown to destroy vitamins A, B, C and E, to breakdown the structure of food, and make fats rancid. Irradiation also produces URP's (unique radiolytic products), new forms which have never before been eaten. Perhaps the most frightening aspect of irradiation is that it increases the amount of carcinogenic aflatoxins in foods such as wheat, onions and potatoes which contain mould. In direct contrast proponents of the irradiation process would claim that irradiation is , if anything, best suited to the preservation of grains.

"COSTS" OF IRRADIATION

The costs, and hidden costs, of irradiation are also a neglected area in the Government's proposal to implement the process in Australia. Not only do consumers need to consider the direct cost of food irradiation and the effect that this will have on the retail price of food products, but also potential health problems as a direct result of the consumption of irradiated food, and the occupational health hazard for people working in irradiation plants. Irradiated food has been offered by the government as a way of increasing exports, and presumably opening up a new market to the Australian agricultural sector. If Australia wishes to export irradiated food then it will be compelled to allow irradiated food to be imported into Australia by other countries, and with the

current problems of heavily subsidised competition undercutting Australia's export market it is quite likely that the same could happen to the domestic market. Far from gaining a market the Australian farmer could very well be losing one.

OTHER CONCERNS

It would appear that the disadvantages of food irradiation far outweigh the advantages. It has been claimed that irradiation would help to stamp out starvation in third world countries. Considering that mass starvation, as it exists today, is a phenomena more correctly attributed to colonialism, nationalism and the corruption of the state; it is in these areas that the answer to starvation will most likely be found (ie. the destruction of the state), rather than with a more efficient method for the destruction of pests. The moral concerns are also numerous. The above research was done on animals. In the event that the current research is found to be lacking (which it obviously is) it is inevitable that these cruel tests will be continued.

It has become obvious in recent years that there is a connection between the civil uses of nuclear power and its military uses. Uranium having been used in a power plant is often regenerated and directed towards military uses.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Despite a great deal of community concern and the still unresolved questions regarding health and research into food irradiation the Queensland government, regretably, is determined to pioneer the process in Australia, and in New South Wales there is already an operating plant at Wetherill Park waiting for the government O.K. to begin irradiating. In the third world the technology will be introduced to a people who will have no understanding of the process and will not be aware of the ill effects that the irradiation process has been shown to have had. There is also an argument that in third world countries where nutrition is so important traditional methods of food preservation would be more appropriate. On moral grounds the process is undesirably because of its experiments on

animals. Overall the flaws and concerns involved the whole issue of food irradiation and nuclear energy shows that the process is of too great an importance to the community and to dangerous to be controlled by the state and its big business partners.

The decision to irradiate our food must be given a public forum and pressure similar to that surrounding the ID card issue must be focused on any decision the government makes in respect to irradiation legislation.

A community protest group has been set up in Sydney to take on the problem of food irradiation and can be contacted at:

PEOPLE AGAINST FOOD IRRADIATION
P.O. BOX 60, CROWS NEST. 2065
Co-ordinators J. Mountwinter 427-2831
L. Bloomfield 872-4181

This group would appear to have a good deal of information on the subject and is looking for people to join their group, to help with petitioning and to inform people of the silent conspiracy surrounding the introduction of food irradiation into Australia.

KEN OATH

Spanish Anarchists:

An extract and notes from Murray Bookchins book "The Spanish Anarchists, the heroic years 1868 - 1936"

"We must look closely at these men and women, these Spanish Anarchists, and try to gain an understanding of their lives, their fervour, and their dedication to the "Idea". Although the founding nuclei of Spanish Anarchism included many intellectuals and students (such figures as Gaspar Sentinon, Trinidad Soriano, Antonio Gonzalez Meneses, and Fermin Salvochea), most of the individuals entering the growing libertarian groups of the cities were ordinary workers. Even the journalists, theoreticians, and historians of this movement were largely self-educated people of proletarian origin who often taught themselves to read and write or attended union and libertarian schools, acquiring their learning by sheer doggedness in the nighttime hours after work. The majority of them had been sent into factory jobs early in life. And later came the responsibilities of family life, of rearing children and maintaining a home. These Anarchists took great pride in their vocational skills and were viewed with immense respect by their fellow workers. Most of them were intensely serious and high-minded individuals. They were also open, candid, and like most Spaniards, passionately devoted to their friends and comrades.

They were individuals with very strong personalities. For example, more dedicated men, once having decided to embrace the "Idea", abjured smoking and drinking, avoided brothels, and purged their talk of "foul" language. They believed these traits to be "vices" - demeaning to free people and fostered deliberately by ruling classes to corrupt and enslave the workers spiritually. It was the duty of every *obera consciente,* of every conscious worker and

especially of an Anarchist, to live by his or her principles not merely to avow them. By the example of the probity and dignity of their lives such workers would help uplift the rest of their class. without this moral regeneration of the proletariat, the revolution would eventually be vitiated by all the corruptive realities of bourgeois society.

What these Spanish Anarchists aimed for, in effect, was a "countersociety" to the old one. It was easy to mistake this for an "alternate society", one that would coexist with capitalism as an enclave of purity and freedom, but nothing could be further from the truth. The Spanish Anarchists expressly rejected the concept of an "alternate society", with its hope of peaceful reconstruction and its privileged position in the world of general misery. They regarded the cooperativist movement as a diversion from the main task of overthrowing capitalism and the state. Since social or personal freedom could not be acquired within the established order, they viewed a "counter society" as a terrain in which to remake themselves into revolutionaries and remove their interests from any stake in bourgeois society. But this terrain was a completely embattled one. Eventually, Anarchist groups formulated their own revolutionary codes, their own concepts of freedom, and created a world of intimate comradeship and solidarity that proved almost impregnable to repression.

Most dedicated Spanish Anarchists not only denied the laws, values, and morality of the existing society, but set out to translate precept into practice. They did not enter into legal marriages. They refused to register the births of their children or to baptize them. The bureaucracy, state, and church were the Anarchists' mortal enemies; any voluntary dealings with these institutions were to be avoided. Children were sent to libertarian or union schools. If these were not available they went to nonclerical institutions or were taught at home. Parents would often give their children names like "Libertaria" (a favorite for the daughters of Anarchist militants) or "Emancipacion"; they might even exchange their own first names for those of Anarchist heroes or martyrs. They disdained the accumulation of money, and if in later years there was much bank-robbing by Anarchists, the funds went entirely to the movement or to libertarian schools and publishing projects. They did not hesitate to use weapons in defending their own rights or in acts of retribution against official violence.

seemingly perfect Anarchist communities particularly since it is unlikely that such information would have been easily obtainable when the book was written (1969).

It comes as a surprise, considering the very favourable light that in which the social organisation of "these Spanish Anarchists" is described, that Bookchin identifies in his bibliographical essay many, if not most, of the sources for this period as having been published prior to 1936 and in some cases prior to the close of the 19th century. Although Bookchin cites many references for his research, some of the best references (journals, newspapers, books, etc.) are unfortunately out of reach for the English reader.

Among the major references consulted by Bookchin in the writing of the above section are; *Historio Social y Economica de Espana y America* (5 vols.), by Jaime Vincens Vives (ed.), (Barcelona 1957-59), which Bookchin claims is exhaustive. As one of the best sources on popular collectivism he cites *Collectivismo Agrario en Espana* by Joaquin Costa (Madrid 1898). Apart from these Bookchin lists other Spanish journals and papers which are relevant to the early history of Spanish Anarchism.

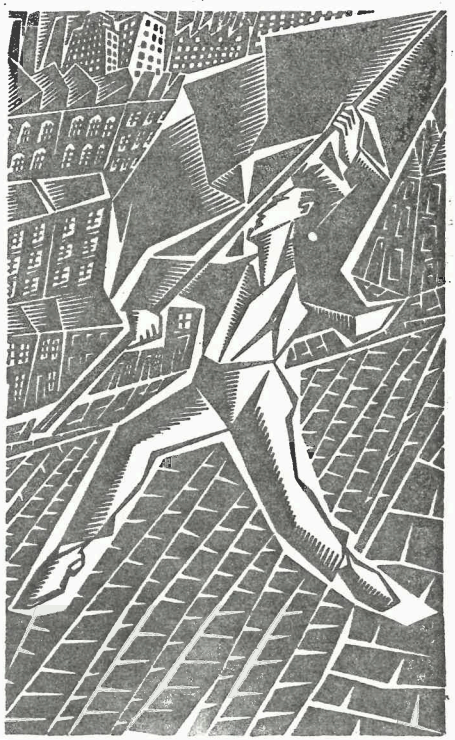
The one volume which Bookchin continues to praise as a source, and which is not too far removed from the period, is Gerald Brennan's book *The Spanish Labyrinth,* (London 1943). As for other English works relevant to the above extract Bookchin cites *An Economic History of Spain,* by Jaime Vincens Vives, (Princeton, 1969), and also Elena de La Souchere's *An Explanation of Spain,* (New York, 1964), describing it as the work most sympathetic to the libertarian spirit of the Spanish people. In Bookchin's opinion of the works in the English language Souchere's work ranks second only to Brennan's.

In addition to the bibliographical essay Murry Bookchin claims, in the introduction to the book, that during a lengthy trip to Europe, he interviewed Anarchists that had been exiled from Spain. He mentions that at the time that he finished the book (1969) that virtually no worthwhile accounts of Spanish Anarchism existed in English, except for Gerald Brennan's book and the largely personal narratives of Franz Borkenau and George Orwell. Thus with no secondary

references adequately sympathetic to the libertarian history and attitudes of the Spanish Anarchists, Bookchin found it necessary to rely upon primary sources for his history.

Murry Bookchin's reliance upon non-English references may lead the cynical or the Marxist to question the accuracy of the above extract, but on the other hand, Bookchin's inability to find reliable secondary sources may be taken as an indication that, in having to rely upon documents of the period, Bookchin has produced a more accurate history of popular collectivism in Spain prior to the revolution, than he might otherwise have done.

JUSTIN ANGLE



What a Way To Run a Railroad

ANOTHER COLLECTIVE BITES THE DUST

Being a review and discussion of "WHAT A WAY TO RUN A RAILROAD: An Analysis of Radical Failure", by Charles Landry, David Morley, Russell Southwood and Patrick Wright.
Comedia Publishing Group.

This important book attempts to answer the question: How can the high failure rate of collective organisations be accounted for? It is part of a series of books published by Comedia that attempt to define effective ways of working that are congruent with democratic aspirations and principles, and examines critically the somewhat depressing history of radical projects that attempt collectivity and participatory democracy.

The authors have a long history of working in the alternative/radical press, in libertarian and community politics, and in the voluntary sector over the last ten years. They could be said to be experts in radical failure. What makes their book exciting and important is not just their clear and unsparing analysis of why collectives often fail, but their valuable advice on how such failure can be avoided.

Some very common features of the 'Radical Collective' perspective since the 1970's have been to do with the politicisation of lifestyle politics: direct action and non-hierarchical organisation; the rejection of formal, bureaucratic structures in favour of loose-knit informal networks. HOW things were done came to be as important to the organisation as WHAT was to be done.

This pursuit of 'structurelessness' came to be a dominant reason for the self-destruction of many collectives.

As early as 1974, the Anarchist Workers Association circulated an article by Jo Freeman, an American feminist, that did not receive the attention it deserved. She argued that there is no such thing as a 'structureless' group: the only question is what kind of structure a group has. Many radical collectives have reacted strongly to the Stalinist 'centralism' of hierarchical organisations, in an effort to prevent leaders from accumulating power, and have abandoned any formal structure. This has not abolished power, merely obscured how it is attained and exercised. The exercise of power is inevitable: the real point is to control it and make those who exercise it accountable.

Take a 'mythical' collective as an example. With the myth of 'non-hierarchical', or anti-bureaucratic procedures prevalent, the network of interested people may deliberately decide not to elect a responsible executive. They may adhere to an idea of participatory democracy, defined as a loose network of people who vote on all decisions. Those who turn up become the voting members.

Let's examine how this may work in practice. An informal elite eventuates. Decisions will still be made, agendas set and issues resolved, but it will usually be done by a group of friends in a pub, or in somebody's living room. The formal meetings take place, but the decisions have been taken elsewhere. Anyone with a gift for emotional blackmail, or the need to intervene can do so, without being checked by any accepted procedure. The 'democratic' seal of approval is merely added to a de facto decision that has already been made. It is hard for anyone to find out who has the real power, who you should lobby, which of the organisation's goals should take priority, and on what criteria the decisions are based.. in other words, a totally open structure can lead to even worse manipulation through hidden power relations, than a more formal group, with accountable elected office-bearers.

In the rejection of 'efficient' (as defined by the business world), hierarchical organisations, with strict division of labour, many have thought that the opposite must be the 'correct' method: fully democratic, informal, non-hierarchical. This

is quite a common viewpoint held by many on this campus (Macquarie - ed.)

This is the principal point of 'What a Way to Run a Railroad': that one dogma of 'good organisation', has been, in many radical organisations, replaced by another equally rigid dogma. The authors have given over the major part of their book to an analysis of strategies for the success of democratic organisations that do not presume there is a rigid, moralistic dogma to be adhered to. They scorn the insistence of 'it doesn't matter if we win, as long as we've played the game in the right spirit'. They believe that organisations that are intimidated by the notion of power are doomed by definition. What matters is developing an effective means of controlling power, so that the tasks of the organisation can be carried out in an effective and accountable manner.

The heart of the problem is in defining responsibilities. If volunteers lightly take on undefined responsibilities, problems are sure to arise. If there is no procedure to ask whether this person is the right one for the job, then when things start to go wrong, it becomes even more difficult to reallocate responsibility. If that individual fails to do the job effectively, how can the situation be altered without it becoming personal?

Bureaucracy and accountability are key issues. This does not simply mean apportioning blame to certain individuals: it means developing an organisational culture that will encourage the individual in question to be the first to bring his or her problems to the attention of the collective. The job should have been well defined to begin with, so that when problems arise, the collective can then seek, in open discussion, whether the job was delegated to the wrong person, whether the collective had defined the task badly, or whether the job could not be done by anyone until external circumstances changed.

It is one strength of good bureaucracy that it distinguishes between the role, and the particular person filling it at the moment. If explicit rules and procedures are developed, newcomers to the organisation can take over a new function without too much trouble.

It is quiet normal, unfortunately, for there to be a crisis when someone leaves

a working collective: no one can effectively take over from them, because all the information, contacts and criteria for decision-making are inside their heads, rather than explicitly formulated by that person and the collective in a way that makes that information accessible to others. A good democratic organisation should not abandon division of labour, but establish a system for making the knowledge generally available to all interested parties in the collective.

Another very important pitfall of collective operations is that of a lack of consciously spelled out priorities. Someone may have an impeccable political stance on sexism, racism, etc., but still be hopelessly inadequate as a poster designer, say, or as a public relations officer. The group needs to spell out what they expect, otherwise to critisise somebody's performance of a particular task becomes a total attack on the person. It becomes impossible to distinguish between 'doing a bad job' and 'being a bad person'.

Another problem that collectives have, is in expecting ALL decisions to be made by the group as a whole. Nobody can act, because it would be seen by some as usurping the authority of the democratic whole. Someone with a particular skill cannot go ahead and work independently, for that is often seen as 'undemocratic'. It can be: but only because the organisation has neglected to define what matters lie within the RELATIVE authority granted to that person, with particular agreed responsibilities, and what is a matter that concerns the whole collective. The individual should know what freedom they have to carry out the objectives of the organisation within their own sphere, and be alert for the situations when they need to review the matter before the whole collective.

It comes up time and time again in the history of every collective: some types of decisions can only be made by consensus, some types of decisions can be settled by a simple vote, and some matters rightly lie within the relative authorative of people with agreed responsibilities, experience and expertise. There are some decisions that are so routine and trivial that they shouldn't come up at a meeting at all. Indeed, the appearance of such trivial and routine matters on the agenda for a meeting is often a sign that something is badly wrong with the effectiveness of the decision-making practices within that organisation. If policy and spheres of relative responsibilities are well-defined, the organisation

will move more rapidly towards its goals, without becoming bogged down in endless bickering. This is particularly a problem with the University collectives, rather than community voluntary organisations, because of their high degree of education and self-confidence. As a general rule, less-educated and less-politicised individuals who join an organisation 'to get things done' are less susceptible to this.

One highly amusing chapter (in my view), deals with an analysis of recent management theories. The authors demonstrate why collectives are so very much worth striving for, by showing the absolute authoritarian nature of the hi-tech darlings of management theory, and the paucity of their ideas. They briefly examine books such as 'In Search of Excellence', showing that they are nothing more than attempts by the established management hierarchy to shore up their powers in the face of demands for participation. That particular book, they say '.. zips along in a style which is both fast and carefully laid back, full of groomed testosterone and that curious blend of machismo and zen which (after the defeat in Vietnam and the rise of OPEC) stands as a hallmark of a newly modified type of American success'. This new set of management techniques is not essentially different from the age-old view of capitalist organisation as a pyramid-structured army. It's just that now the army is seen as one at war on a battlefield, instead of the rigid hierarchy of a peacetime bureaucratic army. People talk of organisational 'tents' and 'temporary structures' rather than fixed and consolidated forms. The idea of a shadow structure alondside the formal one is seen as useful, rather than threatening. Big organisations should foster internal competition, asking their staff to work as 'entrepreneurs' who tender bits of work in teams of their own making. Managerial theorists talk of 'a bias for action' (often even at the expense of analysis), 'Hands-on and Value-driven' managers, who are on the spot and walking the shopfloor (just like the legendary Generals), 'simple form, lean staff' (the structure should be simple and unambiguous: uncomplicated authority and definitely no matrix arrangements). Excellent companies are said to have 'simultaneous loose-tight properties' (both centralised and decentralised - fanatical about central points and core values, but flexible everywhere).

It is evident, I'm sure, from even this abbreviation of some management theory

and practise, that traditional business continues to deny real autonomy to people while at the same time offering them "comfort, undersrtanding, therapy and even the culture of the corporate myths and meaning".

We may rightly sneer at this mythologising and semi-religious claptrap. Most, if not all of these "leadership studies" that are being flaunted as "science" or "knowledge" have no coherence at all, they are threadbare attempts to dress up boy heroism, humanistic psychology and manipulative power as a disguise for a real lack of participation in the workplace for a vast majority of workers. Nevertheless, the left is culpable also in not developing an understanding of an adequate democratic organisational management that can stand up to scrutiny, as a real alternative. Too often, our criticism takes the simple form of denial: a refusal to accept anything of value from these analyses, and we bumble on without any coherent management plan, believing that somehow, because our hearts are in the right place, we must succeed

We must develop ways of patterning RELATIVE and ACCOUNTABLE authority and expertise, which can be used in a temporary and mobile way to achieve specific and political objectives. We must develop our own criteria of organisational effectiveness, and what are going to be the priorities according to which we decide what is possible, and what must be given up for the sake of something more important.

Without any planning of this nature, a collective simply cannot harmonise related processes, it cannot ensure proper and effective flows of information, it cannot match resources to needs, it cannot link output to demand, and it cannot make intelligent and deliberate responses to change that should lie at the heart of an alert and democratic organisation.

LYNDON SHARP

"What a Way to Run a Railroad"
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LETTERS

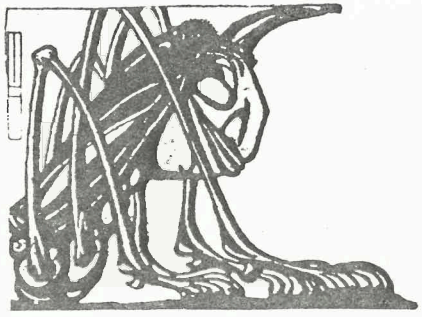
Comrades,

I was fortunate enough that while I was browsing through the stock at Jura Books, I came upon a copy of "Blak Star" #3 and I found it completely exhilerating.

I have been a practising Ⓐ (9yrs) since I was liberated from the misguided "Revolutionary" theory of Karl Marx and discovered the joys of Anarchist Communism.

Again I reiterate how refreshing it was to read Blak Star. Keep up the good work.

Yours For Ⓐ
Rod Mason



Dear Editors,

The Anarchist Student's Union has recently published a quarterly journal, Blak Star. As a result of my role in the editorial/production process of this publication I have had criticisms of it directed towards me, specifically in regard to the article, Nimbin's New-Wave Hippies (pp 20-21). I seek to answer those criticisms in this letter.

The article, which I co-wrote, aims (in my view), to do three things. Firstly, to criticise what the 'hippie' movement has become; secondly, to throw some light on those things essential to "hippiedom" that anarchists disagree with; and thirdly, to condemn the deal that hippies in Nimbin have done with the State.

Before continuing, I feel that I should define "hippie", as some have criticised me on this point. The word was first used in California in 1966-67 to describe the mainly young people participating in the underground movement [1]. They had a tendency

missiveness and willingness to adopt communal living. Beyond this, "Hippiedom" involved a rejection of things material, and a style of dress which included beads, bells, and long hair. This original conception of the hippie did not last in its pure form for longer than two years, its originators themselves staging a 'Death of Hippie' parade in San Francisco in 1968. 'Love-ins', 'flower power' and 'beautiful vibes' had degenerated, largely because of over-exposure by the mass media, into commercialism, violence, and widespread drug abuse. The common (incorrect) usage of the world "hippie" now, however, is to denote any young, long haired person suspected of unconvential standards.

I would say, then, that no true hippies still exist, the originators of the movement having done away with the concept as far back as 1968 (on this point I have been criticised as dogmatic, denying that the movement can continue and/or change. The point, however, is that the movement exists today in the form that the original hippies found so objectionable). Thus the usage, in regard to present-day hippies, of the term new-wave.

In the article under discussion, a number of criticisms were levelled at so-called 'hippies'. I think that these need to be examined in greater detail.

Firstly, the pre-occupation of hippies (old and new) with mysticism and 'Eastern' religions is objectionable in regard to the role that these religions play in controlling behaviour. The 'internal' control mechanisms of the occult or of the Hare Krishnas are no different to those of Christians. Yet the new-wave "hippies" flock off to spiritualist ashrams in Nimbin, for the "mesmerizing chants and songs, and sensual input of sound, smell, pseudo-friendship, peace and love all bouncing off the walls and emanating from the carpet in a santuary sheltered from the hassles of the world where everyone is nice to you and the air is laden with the heady perfume of the sweet limbo of a womb-like trance" [2]. The ashram is the pottery, the guru is the potter, and the minds and lives of these 'hippies' are the clay. Never mind the hierachical/sexist nature of these relgions/ideologies; it's OK so long as a few hippies get to find their "true self". So much for individual freedom, or for the non-conformity/anti-authoritarianism of the 'hippie'.

Secondly, the 'hippies' have achieved fuck all. It's ten years since

the summer of love in Haite-Ashbury, San Francisco, and to date, the flower children have achieved the following result: there are a number of people living in the country, often communally, trying to fit themselves into a rural petty-bourgeois [3] mode of production. These ghettoes in the countryside act as one sort of outlet for people who cannot cope with the pressures of city/university/work life (but, cry the new-wave hippies, they are doing good things up there). Wonderful! But surely the place to do good things - alternative medicine has been cited as an example - is here, where it is really needed, not in Nimbin, where only rich kids can feel the benefits. Elsewhere, (and where is it more noticeable than at Macquarie?) the whole thing has become totally co-opted - the distinctive pre-occupations of the counterculture have a mass appeal of the commercial market; their music, drugs, fashion, have become so many trendy commodities. "The flower children of a decade ago are only visible today as producers and/or consumers of this stream of commodities"[4]. When their products fail to support them, they do deals with the state, such as the $1.28 million NSW Government supported Multiple Occupancy Pilot Project. (The documents relevant to this deal are available. I mention this to counteract claims that the whole thing is an 'anarchist fabrication'. Those claiming this are, of course, some of Macquaries' new-wave hippies.) I hope the usage of the term 'new-wave' is now clear.

A friend of mine has called Nimbin's hippies "vanguard capitalists", an appropriate name to say the least. That they offer no alternative to capitalism should be obvious by now. They aim to lead a change in society, rather, by dropping out and setting up communes [5], hoping others will follow them into an existence as small producers, away from the more visible social evils of capitalism, while still tapping the consumer market.

Finally, I want to point out the unbridled sexism of the 'hippie movement' that came with sexual 'permissiveness'. Men were sexually free, not women. Men were free to fuck anyone, their responsibility removed courtesy of the pill, while the social stigma for non-monogamous women remained. (and how many male hippies talk of their "chicks", and then add "man" at the end of the sentence?) I have trouble understanding radical feminists who uphold the hippie movement.

In conclusion, I which to add a few things. The hippie movement is a commercial gimmick. In the original article, I wrote that so-called hippies "produce for themselves and then flog the surplus to a hippie hungry consumer market.... usually mindless students". For this I make no apologies. People should think about the nature of the 'philosophy' they have embraced; what you see is not what you get. Certain Nimbin new-wave hippies have done a filthy deal with the very state that they pretend to reject - I condemn this on the grounds that Nimbin hippies claim to be 'alternative' (this illustrates the contrary, as it is also a political deal), and that the $1.28 million benefits few people. (hippies, for that matter, tend to be middle class kids who can afford to run away from society and fuck around in Nimbin; for that reason, giving them over a $1,000,000 is questionable). Finally, this is 1987, not 1967, for those of you who seem to have forgotten. It could be that today's problems need to be dealt with in a way relevant to today. But then, copping out seems to go hand-in-hand with hippiedom.

Yours sincerely
Trevor Carless

Notes:

[1] See R.Neville, Play Power (London & N.Y. 1970; or T.Roszak, The Making of a Counter-culture (Garden City N.Y. 1969; London 1970)

[2] Honi Soit (no volume number) 26/10/78 p.6

[3] from Petit-bourgeois; these were men (gender specific) of small scale wealth and property, owners of single shops, plots of land, workshops etc. The similarity doesn't end there. The Petit-bourgeois had narrow minds, limited horizons, and obscurantist attitudes to art and culture.

[4] Notes on Libertarian Socialism. Published by Libertarian Socialist Collective and LaTrobe Libertarian Socialists.

[5] A method of change borrowed from C19th Utopian socialists, although hippies (especially new-wave) are by no means socialists.

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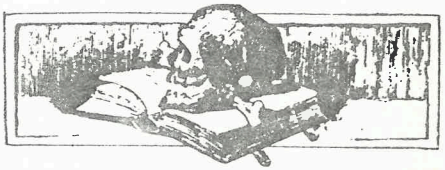

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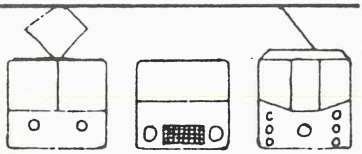

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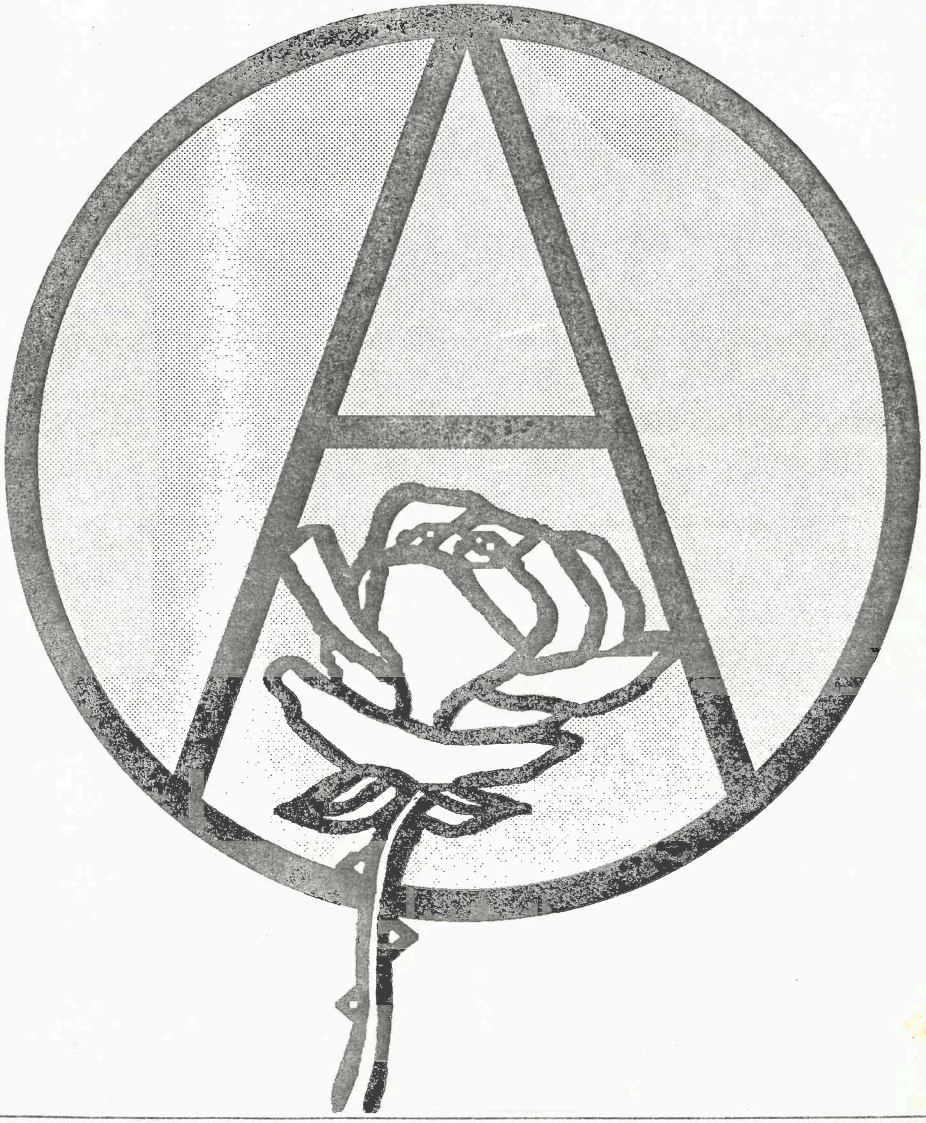

There is a Tzar in this world. He is without pity.
HUNGER is his name.